

Member Action Committee REPORT

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MAC MEETING TO FEATURE CO-OP PRICE SURVEY PROBE

Does your food bill indicate that Co-op price surveys are conducted in another country?

The Co-op News frequently prints Co-op price survey results supporting claims which appear to contradict members' shopping experience. At its June 21 meeting, the Member Action Committee will present a probe by Anne Frentz of the pronouncements on prices in the Co-op News. Mrs. Frentz has made a number of price surveys for the News.

"Co-op Price Surveys and How They Work -- Sometimes" will be the feature of the meeting, 8 PM, at the University Avenue meeting room. Also, the MAC steering committee will offer proposals for the structure and aims of MAC and open the meeting to suggestions and ideas from the audience. Also on the agenda are election of officers and formation of additional study groups, such as:

Personnel & fair employment policies, Relations with other Co-op organizations, Merchandising practices, Prices, Member participation & control, Management, Education, and MAC publication and MAC fund-raising.

John Hart

SLIDE-RULE SHOPPING AT CO-OP?

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MEMBER INTRODUCES CIA RESOLUTION

A stormy semi-annual meeting on May 26 was punctuated by frequent clashes between Chairman Carroll Melbin and Co-op members in the audience. It ended inconclusively after heated discussion of a proposal that the Co-op withhold contribution to organizations funded by the CIA.

Shortly before 11 PM, Co-op member Gilbert Bendix introduced a resolution calling upon the board of directors to disassociate the Co-op from any organization which has received CIA funds and to cease contributions to such organizations. The resolution was a response to recent revelations of large-scale CIA support to the Co-op League's Fund for International Cooperative Development, of which Worldwide Co-op Partners is an activity. The resolution stated:

"WHEREAS, it can safely be assumed that the United States Central Intelligence Agency supports only those programs which further the aims of said agency, and

"WHEREAS, it is not in the interest of the Consumers Cooperative of Berkeley, Inc. to subsidize activities furthering the aims of the CIA, as such funds should be provided from government sources, and

"WHEREAS, furthermore, it is damaging to the integrity and reputation of this Co-op to be associated with any organization of the cloak and dagger type,

"THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this organization instruct its Board of Directors

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to refrain from organizational affiliation with and financial contribution to any organization known to have been funded, wholly or in part, by the Central Intelligence Agency."

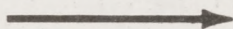
Art Emmes opposed the resolution, arguing that "the Co-op League was seduced." Board Alternate Larry Duga countered that "an organization which has received more than one-half million dollars from the CIA has not been seduced, but rather has sold itself like a whore."

Another speaker opposed the motion on the ground that withholding contributions "would violate our neutrality." Member Marriott Dickey proposed that if members were unhappy with the CIA situation they should "pass the hat and pay back the CIA money received."

At this point, someone raised the question of a quorum. Registration revealed that the meeting was 12 members short of the 250-member quorum. Co-op legal counsel Dick Johnston said that lack of a quorum during the evening threw in doubt the legality of the actions taken, including election of nominating committee.

It was pointed out by a member of the audience that no quorum was necessary for discussion of the CIA issue. Although several people were waiting at the microphone to speak, the chair recognized City Councilman William T. (Zack) Brown, manager of the Co-op Credit Union and member of the Committee for Cooperation, who moved immediate adjournment of the meeting. That motion passed 54 - 47.

Larry Duga



Oh -- and since I never saw a slide rule shopping at the Co-op, perhaps this would be better --

SLIDE-RULE SHOPPING AT CO-OP?

To be or not to be . . . a cooperative or a business? This is the question. Because a consumer-owned, consumer-operated cooperative is supposed to serve the "owners" and "operators", it seems rather inconsistent to use tricky, confusing prices and "sales" when the aim is to benefit the consumer.

We commend the Co-op for the many displays and special services rendered to inform the consumer on economical budgeting, packaging and "best buys" (for example, the breakfast cereal unit pricing list supplied by the home economists). Nevertheless, we feel that Co-op should be consistent in carrying out this informative, honest approach to prices and goods.

Many Co-op shoppers have complained that they often cannot determine whether a certain product is a good buy. Here are just a few examples: Co-op (brand) evaporated milk is priced at 3/23¢ for the 6 oz. can, and 14¢ each for the 14½ oz. can. Can you easily guess how much you pay for each size? Not unless you carry a slide rule while you shop. Our calculations reveal that you pay: 1.278¢ per ounce for the 6 oz. can; and 0.965¢ per ounce for the 14½ oz. can.

Various prices on apples, oranges, etc. in the past few months have been marked: 4/59, 5/79, 2/39, 3/49, to mention a few. Is it necessary to carry a slide rule to shop economically at Co-op? The answer should be NO . . . hopefully it will be No in the near future. The Consumer Information and Protection Committee is working on this now. Let the members know of your interest, through the suggestion boxes in the store. Unit pricing would be a good policy to apply to ALL merchandise sold at Co-op. Let's bring about a 100% cooperative organization FOR THE CONSUMERS.

Bonita Ko

FEELINGS RUN HIGH AT SEMI-ANNUAL MEETING

A seemingly routine agenda lurched its way through three hours of awards, a panel discussion on the proposed by-law amendment for the benefit of 30 people who had not voted, and boos and hisses, snorts of disgust and cries of protest by many members who felt that they were being denied a chance to express themselves either by nominating or discussion. Procedural confusion abounded as various issues evoked Robert's Rules as frequently as they did discussion.

One thing settled, at least for six months, was the retention of minority representation on the Co-op board, as members marked their ballots 562 - 501 against the six-vote by-law amendment.

Nominations for nominating committee went smoothly as each center council representative nominated candidates in turn. When all the councils were finished, a motion was made to close nominations. A howl of protest went up. However, the motion passed 108 - 36, and a motion to reopen nominations failed 88 - 63 with not enough second thoughts.

Questioning of the candidates was requested, and the row started all over again.

One center council representative called the questioning "superfluous" since the candidates had already been selected by the councils. Director Dave Bortin said that the questioning was a change in the agenda and as such it should be changed only by a majority vote. Called in to arbitrate, board counsel Dick Johnston said it was doubtful whether such questioning of candidates was a change in the agenda and that a motion was not necessary.

Gene Mannila's manager's report was forthright; he pointed out the drop in earnings and in refunds. He added that we "need a miracle . . . to meet last year's levels." He saw low earnings as caused by Co-op's services and the burden of weaker departments. Also, Mannila pointed out that with a diversity of interests, it was "difficult to command shopping loyalty". In urging more shopper loyalty to increase volume, he did not say how this loyalty could be obtained. His remedy for the financial situation was more volume and to "get it through facilities like Shattuck and Telegraph Avenue."

Except for the by-law amendment with its write-in votes, all the struggling of the meeting might as well not have taken place. There was not a quorum to make anything passed (or defeated) legal.

John Hart



SUPPORT THE MAC REPORT

If you can afford to join the several members who have pledged a small amount for each issue of MAC REPORT, call TH 1-7939. We need about 20 additional interested and solvent friends who will provide \$1 or \$2 for each issue we publish.

OH, THE INCONVENIENCES OF DEMOCRACY

"In this way board business would not be hamstrung by any minority voting where we take two steps in one direction and three backwards."

-- Director Dave Bortin, defending the six-vote ballot amendment at the semi-annual meeting.

BUILD A BETTER CO-OP

BOARD KILLS MOTION TO STOP CIA CONTRIBUTIONS

On May 22 the Co-op Board of Directors voted five to four to kill an amendment that would delete recipients of CIA funds from the list of organizations eligible to receive contributions from the Consumer Co-op of Berkeley.

Board alternate Larry Duga proposed the amendment when it was revealed that the Co-op public relations committee recommended contribution of up to \$2,050 to Co-op organizations, including Worldwide Co-op Partners. WCP is an activity of the Co-op League's Fund for International Cooperative Development (FICD), recently named as recipient of more than \$1/2 million from the CIA.

Ed Barankin objected to withholding funds because it would suggest that (Stanley) "Dreyer was a liar." Dreyer, president of the Cooperative League and secretary-treasurer of FICD had denied any knowledge of CIA support until an audit of the organization's tax statements revealed contributions from the Hoblitzelle Foundation of Dallas, a CIA conduit.

Director Dave Bortin asserted that Dreyer had been "too truthful" in saying that the Cooperative League's international affiliates would "take money from the devil, if no strings were attached." Bortin pointed out that "volunteer organizations don't check the sources of their funds." He called the Co-op overseas operations good, because they "provide an alternative to Communism."

Chairman Carroll Melbin and Oliver Gilbert joined Bortin, Barankin, and Dorst to defeat the motion. Opposing further contributions to CIA funds recipients were Ray Thompson, Maudelle Shirek, Bob Arnold, and Larry Duga. Bob Treuhaft, Clint White, and Marge Hayakawa were absent.

Barankin then introduced a resolution expressing confidence in the Co-op League on the part of the Berkeley Co-op Board, and stating the Board's belief that the Co-op League had never accepted funds with strings attached. Director Bortin pointed out that this was not on the agenda and that a vote of confidence would not appear very supportive if it passed five to four. Barankin withdrew his motion.

Minority Hiring: In a presentation by Co-op personnel director Fenton Hughes, "Some General Comments on the Annual Report about Minority Employment in the Co-op", he pointed out that "whites are twice as likely as Negroes to be employed in retail trade. If we assume that 20 to 25% of the Berkeley - El Cerrito population is Negro, a strict policy of fair employment would result in a figure of 10 to 12% Negroes employed, rather than 20%."

Director Arnold commented that following the prevailing practice in the trade "was not 'fair.'" Arnold questioned the practice of modeling Co-op policies on "what is being done in business, rather than what should be done." Hughes replied that he felt that "fair was a poor choice of words"; he suggested replacing it with "neutral."

Charity Hirsch

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One of the first responses of the Co-op to the presence of MAC was to mention in the May 1 Co-op News that member suggestions were invited. Since the manner of previous Co-op handling of member suggestions was one of the reasons that brought MAC into being, we can only hope that members get action when they submit their ideas to the News.

If you submit an idea to which the Co-op management gives a frivolous response, send it to Member Action Committee, c/o MAC Suggestion Department, 61 San Mateo Road, Berkeley 94707.

Charles Smith